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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/021,663	10/23/2001	Nick R. Mann	LIT-PI-544	5564
7590	09/22/2004		EXAMINER	
Stephen R. Christian P.O. Box 1625 Idaho Falls, ID 83415-3899			CINTINS, IVARS C	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1724	
DATE MAILED: 09/22/2004				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/021,663	MANN ET AL.	
	Examiner Ivars C. Cintins	Art Unit 1724	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 July 2004.
 2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 38-52 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 38-52 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____

5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
 6) Other: _____

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

Claims 38-52 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Mann et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,514,566). As pointed out in the previous Office action, the reference discloses an ion processing system comprising a column assembly having an inlet and an outlet, which column assembly contains a composite medium of the type recited. Applicant should note that at least two of the spherical particles **304** in this reference system are in contact with one another (see Fig. 2), and this is all that is required by the limitation “a plurality of discrete particles in mutual contact,” as now recited in the claims of this application. Also, since the interstitial regions between the particles contain a material (i.e. substrate material **302**) that is capable of passing a fluid therethrough (see col. 8, line 2), this substrate material must inherently contain “at least one void,” as now further recited in the claims of this application.

Applicant’s arguments filed June 7, 2004 have been noted and carefully considered but are not deemed to be persuasive of patentability. Applicant argues that the Mann Patent fails to disclose a composite medium comprising “a plurality of discrete particles in mutual contact arranged to define a plurality of interstitial regions therebetween, each of the interstitial regions comprising at least one void.” It is pointed out, however, that although most of the discrete particles **304** in this reference system are separated from one another, at least one of these particles is in contact with an adjacent particle (see Fig. 2, right center portion of chamber 203);

and this is all that is required by the term "a plurality of discrete particles in mutual contact."

Applicant should further note that the interstitial regions between the particles in this reference system contain a substrate material which is capable of passing a fluid therethrough (see col. 8, line 2); and therefore, this substrate material must inherently contain "at least one void."

Applicant also argues, with respect to claims 49 and 51, that although Fig. 2 of the reference illustrates particles having a circular cross-section, this does not necessarily mean that they are spherical, since they could have an elongated structure, such as a rod shape. Again, this argument has been noted and carefully considered, but is not deemed to be persuasive of patentability since this reference clearly discloses (see col. 2, line 36) that the particles have a spherical shape.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to I. Cintins whose telephone number is (571) 272-1155. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mr. Duane Smith, can be reached at (571) 272-1166.

The centralized facsimile number for the USPTO is (703) 872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Ivars Cintins
Ivars C. Cintins
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1724

I. Cintins
September 19, 2004